

Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee

10.00am, Thursday, 3 September 2020

Homelessness Services – Update

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note the work to increase provision of self-contained properties to be used as temporary accommodation.
- 1.2 To note the development of a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP) for Edinburgh.
- 1.3 To note the previously approved decision to invest in Home Share properties and the progress in developing this service so far.
- 1.4 To note the current temporary accommodation that has been contracted since the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 1.5 To note the work on an exit strategy and transition post lock down to find positive solutions for people moving on from accommodation provided as a public health response to the Covid 19 pandemic.
- 1.6 To note that further work will be carried out to develop additional accommodation options.

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Report

Homelessness Services – Update

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report provides an update on the development of the Council's Temporary Accommodation Services, both pre and during the Covid-19 pandemic and responds to Councillor Watt's motion through the Policy and Sustainability Committee of 9 July 2020.

3. Background

- 3.1 Since the beginning of lockdown restrictions, the Council has been required to secure additional temporary accommodation to meet public health objectives and manage a lack of throughput into all forms of settled accommodation, to fulfil its statutory duties to homeless people
- 3.2 As the Council moves into the adaptation and renewal phase, the Homelessness and Housing Support service will continue to discharge the Council's statutory duties to homeless people and develop services to meet demands. The future strategy will be outlined in the Council's Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, which will be presented to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on 3 September 2020.

4. Main report

- 4.1 During the period of the Covid-19 restrictions, the Council has secured access to around 500 additional bed spaces, which could be used to accommodate homeless people. Around 260 of these are self-contained properties.
- 4.2 These additional properties are a mixture of spot purchased accommodation and increases to existing contracted provision. Details of the breakdown of these can be found in Appendix 1.

- 4.3 Increasing the provision of self-contained properties is crucial in ensuring the Council can meet the conditions set out in the Unsuitable Accommodation Order. Previously the order focussed on ensuring that families with children were accommodated suitably. It also sought to ensure that families were, wherever possible, not accommodated in accommodation such as bed and breakfast accommodation.
- 4.4 The Scottish Government planned to introduce legislation to ensure that certain forms of accommodation, for example hotel and bed and breakfast accommodation, were deemed unsuitable for all households, not just those with children in May 2021.
- 4.5 The Scottish Government brought that forward to May 2020 but allowed some exemptions due to the Covid-19 pandemic. At this time, these exemptions will end on 31 January 2021. Officers continue to engage with civil servants on the method of reporting potential breaches of the unsuitable accommodation, as there is currently a lack of clarity on what is required.
- 4.6 A working group of local authority officers, civil servants and elected members has been formed to form the final guidance for the order and this will be discussed at the COSLA wellbeing board on 18 September 2020 prior to final guidance being published.
- 4.7 In addition to responding to the changes to the Unsuitable Accommodation Order, the Council is required by the Scottish Government to deliver a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan (RRTP).
- 4.8 The RRTP has been developed by officers and will be presented to the Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee on 3 September 2020 for approval.
- 4.9 The RRTP sets out how the Council will deliver rapid rehousing focussing on four key areas:
 - 4.9.1 Preventing homelessness in the first place focussing on early intervention.
 - 4.9.2 Transforming temporary accommodation and moving away from the use of unsuitable accommodation.
 - 4.9.3 Supporting people to access settled accommodation as quickly as possible.
 - 4.9.4 Reducing the number of people rough sleeping in the city.
- 4.10 The Council has continued to develop services for homeless people. Home Share, where unrelated households can share a property in temporary accommodation has proven to be successful for those accessing it. To further increase the provision of this form of accommodation, a report was approved at Council on 6 February 2020 which gave officers permission to buy up to five properties for use as a Home Share.
- 4.11 To date, one property has been purchased. The temporary closure of the housing market has delayed progress in this area, but officers will continue to identify suitable properties.

- 4.12 During the pandemic, the Council and its partners secured two large scale hotels, to provide accommodation with support for rough sleepers and others in housing crisis. A report was presented to the Policy and Sustainability Committee on 9 July, which outlined the exit strategies from these two properties.
- 4.13 The dates for the closures of the hotels were 16 July 2020 for the Old Waverley Hotel and 14 September for the Cairn Hotel. The exit from the Old Waverley was completed to schedule with full move on and support plans for all residents and the exit from the Cairn Hotel is currently on schedule.
- 4.14 The Council's previous RRTP identified that even if all available social lets were made available to homeless people it would be insufficient to address demand (pre-Covid).
- 4.15 Our priority remains to support people to move into permanent housing. The Council has one of the largest affordable house building programmes in Scotland and we are also purchasing homes on the open market, as part of our acquisitions and disposals strategy.
- 4.16 Furthermore, officers are currently exploring the future use of short term let accommodation in Edinburgh as a way to increase the supply of permanent homes available in the city.
- 4.17 The Council is currently working with Registered Social Landlord (RSL) partners and developers to support delivery of affordable housing on private sector sites and developing a framework to enable Edinburgh Living to acquire more new build homes.
- 4.18 Officers are also working with Link Housing Association to acquire more homes for the Private Sector Leasing Scheme, many of which are expected to come from the Short Term Let (STL) market.
- 4.19 With regards to the progress of the PSL scheme, COVID-19 has required some implementation work to be delayed ensuring that the core service is maintained safely. Progress is now picking up for the second quarter of 2020/21 and PSL property numbers have begun to grow – 1410 properties at the end of June 2020. Link are also responding to same-day referrals from the Temporary Accommodation Service.
- 4.20 Link Housing has purchased eight properties with plans to buy £30 million on properties to invest in the scheme and have more than 40 Landlord properties under procurement in addition to those procured since 1 April 2020.
- 4.21 At present, officers are exploring the possibility of acquiring hotel type accommodation for use as additional rapid access accommodation, however officers are not aware of any opportunities to purchase other forms of accommodation for example hotels and/or student accommodation for use as temporary accommodation at the moment. If opportunities are brought forward, we will explore suitability for the client group and, if appropriate, present business cases for consideration by Committee.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work Committee will consider the RRTP and if approved this will be submitted to the Scottish Government.
- 5.2 Officers will continue to seek to identify appropriate properties for use as Home Share as instructed by members.
- 5.3 Officers will work with partners and landlords in the city to increase the amount of suitable temporary accommodation available.
- 5.4 Officers will bring back a further report to Council detailing the outcomes of the exploratory work regarding the future use of short term lets and the potential acquisition of hotel accommodation for rough sleepers.
- 5.5 Link Housing Association will continue to increase the number of properties in the Private Sector Leasing Scheme, through either purchase or leasing additional stock.
- 5.6 Officers will ensure that the exit from the Cairn Hotel is managed to schedule and that appropriate support plans exist for all residents.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The cost of temporary accommodation continues to grow, due to a shortage of suitable move-on accommodation. Due to Covid-19 restrictions, there has been a further increase in demand and a reduction in the number of allocations being made to permanent accommodation.
- 6.2 The financial impact in 2020/21 will depend on the number of homeless presentations as restrictions are relaxed and how quickly allocations to permanent accommodation can be made. The net pressure forecast for 2020/21 is currently £5.7m which is primarily related to the impact of Covid-19. This is based on the number of households currently in temporary accommodation, including those previously rough sleeping or using night shelters and those with no recourse to public funds (NRPF). The forecast pressure allows for an element of growth in numbers over the remainder of the financial year.
- 6.3 The service is currently developing financial plans that seek to address the current £5.7m pressure and achieve the aims of the RRTP over the next 5 years. The financial implications, will be considered in the 2021/22 budget process.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 N/a

8. Background reading/external references

8.1 [Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan](#)

9. Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1 – Breakdown of Temporary Accommodation

Appendix 1

Breakdown of additional temporary accommodation sourced during the period of the Covid-19 restrictions used to accommodate people that are homeless:

The Council has secured access to around 500 additional bed spaces.

Around 260 of these are self-contained properties

SELF CONTAINED PROPERTIES

107 – Interim Accommodation Framework

153 – Spot purchase

TOTAL: 260 properties.

Additional Information on Interim Accommodation Framework

- *Contract start date is 10 February 2020 for 24 month period with opportunity to extend for further 12 months.*
- *A minimum of two months' notice must be given if withdrawing properties from contract.*